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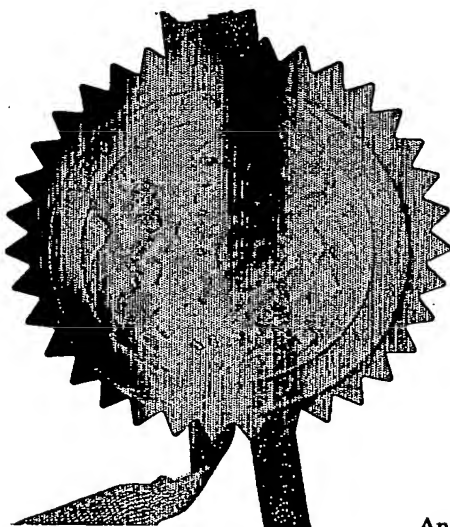
REC'D 18 MAY 2004
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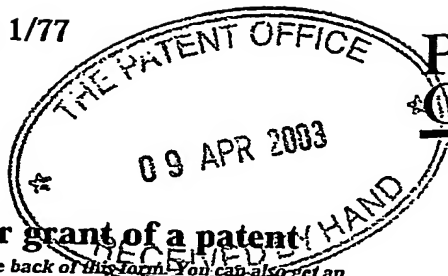


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Dated 7 May 2004

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1/77

Request for grant of a patent

(See the notes on the back of this form. You can also get an explanatory leaflet from the Patent Office to help you fill in this form)

The Patent Office

Cardiff Road
Newport
South Wales
NP9 1RH

9 APR 2003

1. Your reference

MJB07267GB

2. Patent application number

(The Patent Office will fill in this part)

0308197.3

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (underline all surnames)

The Technology Partnership plc
Melbourn Science Park
Cambridge Road
Melbourn
Royston
Hertfordshire SG8 6EE

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation

United Kingdom

6771901001

4. Title of the invention

GAS FLOW GENERATOR

5. Name of your agent (if you have one)

Gill Jennings & Every

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (including the postcode)

Broadgate House
7 Eldon Street
London
EC2M 7LH

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

745002 ✓

6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and (if you know it) the or each application number

Country

Priority application number
(if you know it)

Date of filing
(day / month / year)

7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application

Number of earlier application

Date of filing
(day / month / year)

8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? (Answer 'Yes' if

YES

- a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
 - b) there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or
 - c) any named applicant is a corporate body.
- See note (d))

Patents Form 1/77

9. Enter the number of sheets for any of the following items you are filing with this form. Do not count copies of the same document

Continuation sheets of this form

Description

5

Claim(s)

Abstract

Drawing(s)

4

10. If you are also filing any of the following, state how many against each item.

Priority documents

Translations of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (Patents Form 7/77)

Request for preliminary examination and search (Patents Form 9/77)

Request for substantive examination (Patents Form 10/77)

Any other documents (please specify)

NO

11. For the applicant
Gill Jennings & Every

I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature

Date

Michael John Brunner 9 April 2003

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

BRUNNER, Michael John

020 7377 1377

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Notes

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GAS FLOW GENERATOR

The present invention relates to a gas flow generator and, more particularly, to a gas flow generator incorporating a piezoelectric or electrostrictive device.

Modern electronic devices, particularly portable devices such as laptop computers, mobile telephone and the like are becoming ever more powerful, thus increasing the amounts of electrical power used by, in particular, microprocessors employed in such devices, and therefore there is a growing need for cooling of such microprocessors. Cooling is also required in electrochemical batteries and other gas flow requirements are to be found in, for example, fuel cells.

Various types of cooling are known, for example using fans, heat pipes or Peltier devices, but these suffer from a number of problems such as expense, noise, power consumed or size, for example. It has been proposed, see US-4753579-A, to utilise a piezoelectric transducer to cause movement of a blade, which may be tapered and which may carry a hinged perforated membrane, acting as an amplifier to cause a flow of gas around the blade.

It is also known, see US-5914856-A to utilise a piezoelectric driver in conjunction with a one way valve to cause a flow of gas. However, the requirement to provide highly miniaturised valves is problematic since they are both expensive and prone to failure.

The present invention is aimed at providing a sufficiently strong and efficient gas flow from a thin-walled device capable of being provided with a low profile and having light weight which additionally does not require the use of separate valves.

According to the present invention there is provided a gas flow generator comprising an ultrasonic driver comprising a piezoelectric or electrostrictive transducer mounted on a substrate, operation of the transducer being arranged to cause the driver to bend;

a first membrane disposed on or formed integrally with the transducer or the substrate; and

a second membrane mounted substantially parallel with the driver and spaced a given distance therefrom,

one of the membranes being perforate, whereby ultrasonic bending of the driver on actuation of the transducer causes a gas flow through the perforate membrane.

The perforate membrane may be either or both of the first or second membranes.

Preferably, the ultrasonic driver has a piezoelectric transducer having a thickness substantially the same as the substrate to which it is mounted, the substrate and the piezoelectric transducer having substantially comparable stiffness which, when the transducer is caused to expand (substantially in the plane of the driver) causes the driver to bend, carrying the first membrane with it. WO-93/10910-A discloses a piezoelectric actuator of a similar type employed for the generation of fluid droplets.

The driver may be operated at mechanical resonance to produce large amplitude vibrations in the bending mode. An annular ultrasonic driver may be used, in which case the substrate may include, either integral or mounted thereon, a non-perforate membrane effectively closing the central aperture in the driver, with gas flow through the opposing perforate membrane spaced from the substrate, or the perforate membrane may be integral with or mounted on the substrate with the non-perforate membrane being opposed. A further embodiment may include two perforate membranes, one on the substrate and one opposing it, gas flow being through both.

The perforate membrane may then be supported on the substrate of the driver by a spacer, for example, a generally annular spacer and an opening can be provided through the spacer to allow gas flow into the cavity formed between the driver and the perforate membrane. In use the volume of the cavity alternatively expands and contracts creating a differential pressure and hence a gas flow through the device.

In an alternative construction the first membrane is perforate and gas flow is through the aperture in the annular driver.

The gas flow can be used to cool microelectronic and other devices as mentioned above or to supply gas flow for other purposes though devices requiring a gas flow therethrough.

5 Examples of gas flow generators constructed in accordance with the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figs. 1 and 2 are cross-sections through thin-walled ultrasonic drivers which may be used in a generator of the present invention;

Figs. 3 and 4 illustrate plan views of the same drivers;

10 Figs. 5 and 6 illustrate two further drivers, in plan view, but rectangular in outline, rather than circular as in Figs. 3 and 4, but having substantially the same cross-section (see therefore Figs. 1 and 2);

Figs. 7 and 8 illustrate the bending modes of the drivers of Figures 1 and 2 respectively;

15 Figs. 9, 10 and 11 illustrate examples of generators according to the present invention in cross-section;

Fig. 12 is a plan view of the generator shown in cross-section in Fig. 11; and

20 Figs. 13 and 14 are graphs showing typically membrane separation during actuation of the driver and corresponding pressures developed within the cavity between the membranes, respectively.

Figures 1 and 3 illustrate a first ultrasonic driver 1, in the form of a disc 2 of a piezoelectric material (e.g. PZT) bonded to a larger diameter disc of stainless steel 3 on one side, on the other side of the stainless steel 3 disc being bonded a circular stainless steel membrane 4. An active ultrasonic driver is formed by connecting electrodes on opposite sides of the piezoelectric disc 2 (which are not shown - for purposes of clarity) so that when an electric field is applied across the piezoelectric disc 2 and it responds by attempting to change shape, as long as the substrate 3 and the piezoelectric material 2 are of comparable stiffness, the driver is caused to bend and when operated at
30 mechanical resonance, large vibration amplitudes can be created. In turn therefore the stainless steel membrane 4 is flexed.

A similar driver is shown in Figures 2 and 4 and the same reference numerals are used for simplicity, but in this case the piezoelectric and the substrate are annular. The stainless membrane is circular and effectively closes the aperture in the centre of the substrate 3.

5 Corresponding linearly-acting, rectangular drivers 11 are shown in Figs. 5 and 6 with the same numbers being used for similar components for ease of reference.

The bending modes of the drivers shown in Figs. 1, 3 and 5 and 2, 4 and 6 respectively and used in the generality of Figs. 9 to 11, are shown in Figs. 7
10 and 8.

The driver shown in Fig. 2 is incorporated in a gas flow generating device as shown in Figs. 9, 10 and 11. In the device shown in Fig. 10, a second stainless membrane 5 is shown spaced at a suitable distance from the membrane 4, held in position by an annular 6 and forming a cavity 10. The
15 centre part of the stainless membrane 5 has perforations 7 through it which may be in the form of tapered or non-tapered orifices. The tapered orifices may be forwardly tapered, i.e. narrowing in the downwards direction as shown or reverse-tapered, i.e. narrowing in the upward direction as shown in Fig. 10.

In the example generator shown in Fig. 9 the membrane 4 is deformed at its centre and is closely spaced from the membrane 5 which is held at a
20 greater distance from the driver 1 by a spacer 6' thus providing the cavity 10 between the membranes with a larger volume.

The example generator shown in Fig. 11 is broadly similar, but avoids any coupling between the membranes 4 and 5 by supporting the membrane 5
25 via the spacer 6" on an annulus 8 which is connected to the substrate 3 by spokes 9 (see Fig. 12).

In operation of all of the devices shown above, when the driver is operated, the membrane attached to the driver is caused to vibrate so that the cavity between the membranes alternately expands and contracts. Asymmetry,
30 resulting either from the size, shape or direction of tapering of the holes or in the actuation of the driver, enables a differential pressure to be generated within the cavity as shown in Fig. 14 so that a gas flow is caused between the inside and the outside of the cavity 10. In the device shown in Fig. 11 gas flow may be

between the spokes supporting the spacer 6" and through the perforations in the membrane 5, but in other constructions gas flow may be through apertures (not shown) formed in the membrane 4 or in the spacers 6, 6'.

5 The particular direction of the gas flow will be determined to the particular use by which the gas flow generator is put in practise.

10 In examples tested to date, perforations with a hole size of 50 to 150 μ m at a pitch of 350 to 800 μ m have been utilised, together with a driver operating with a 5 μ m amplitude. It is expected that operation with smaller diameter holes and correspondingly smaller diameter pitch between the holes, for example 10 μ m diameter at 100 μ m pitch could also be used.

Although stainless steel has been used for the membranes shown in the examples, other materials such as Kapton and brass may be utilised where desirable or acceptable.

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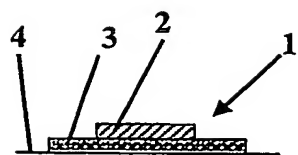


Fig. 1

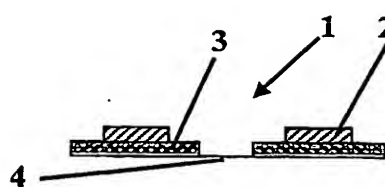


Fig. 2

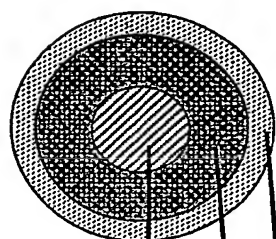


Fig. 3

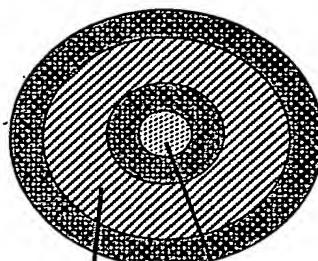


Fig. 4

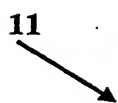


Fig. 5

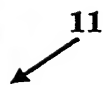
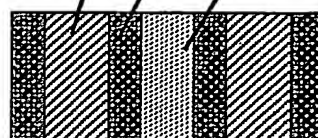


Fig. 6



Fig. 7

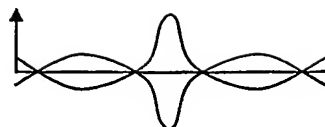
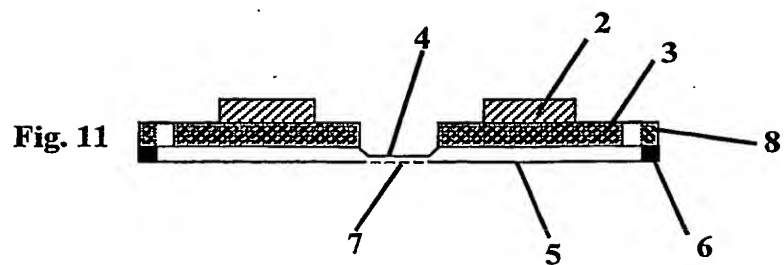
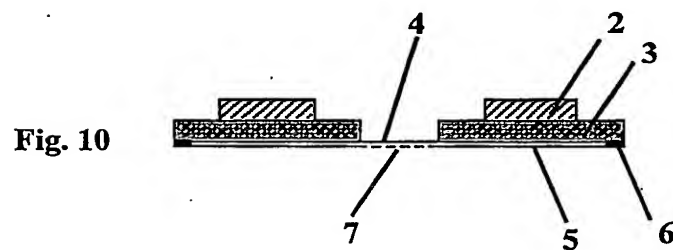
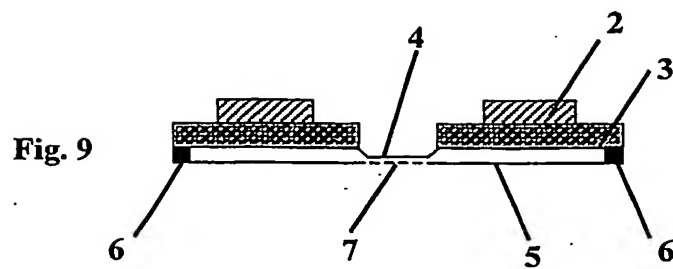


Fig. 8



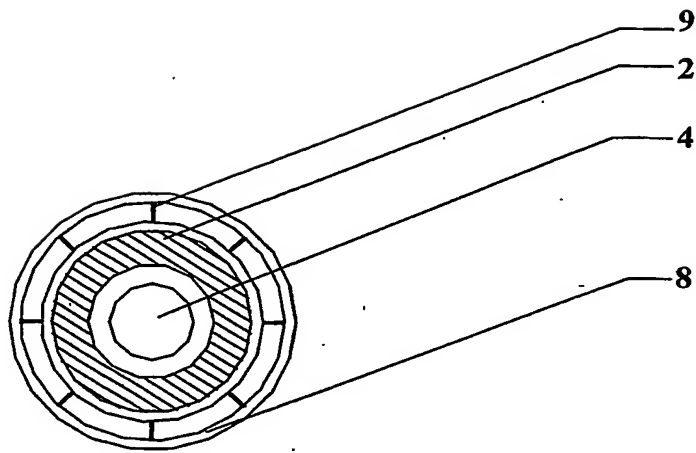


Fig. 12

Fig. 13

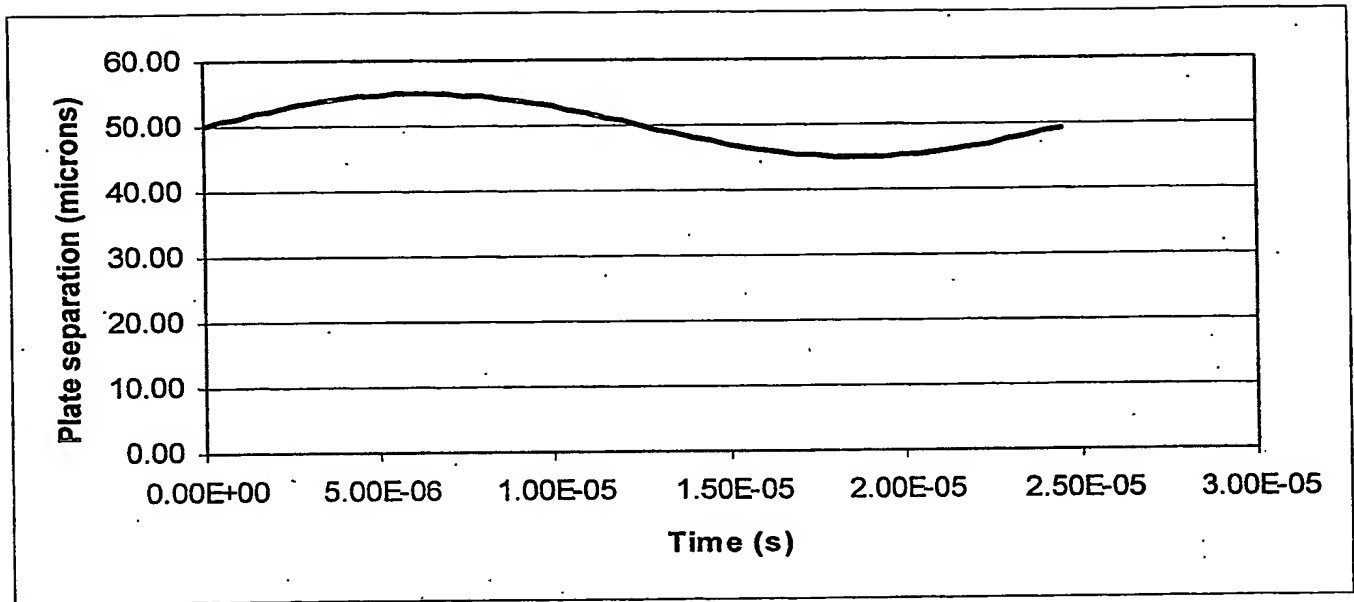
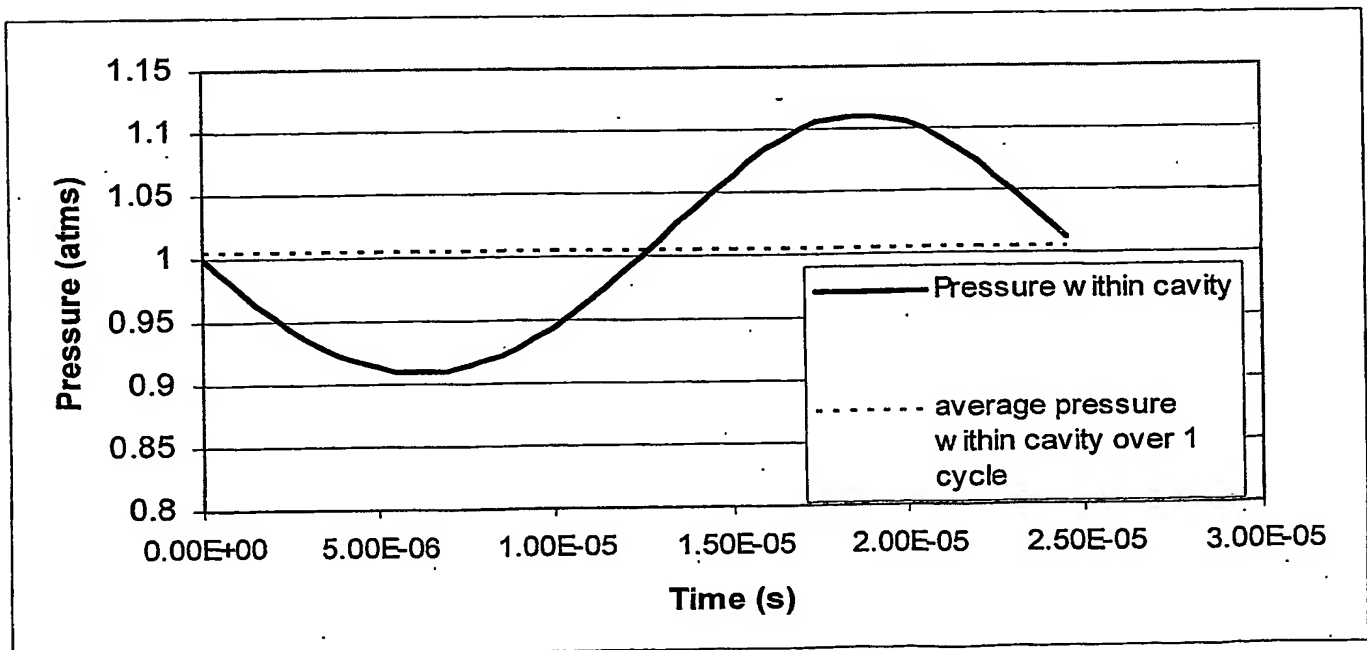


Fig. 14



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